

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCPS use only
received
date entered

1. Name

historic Robert Morris Inn

and/or common Riverview House, "Sinclair House," "Sandaway"

2. Location

street & number East side of Morris Street at the Strand not for publication

city, town Oxford vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland code 24 county Talbot code 041

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Kenneth H. Gibson

street & number The Strand, P. O. Box 26

city, town Oxford vicinity of state Maryland 21654

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Talbot County Courthouse

street & number North Washington Street

city, town Easton state Maryland 21601

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

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Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Robert Morris Inn is located at the southeast corner of Morris Street at the Strand, overlooking the Tred Avon River in Oxford, Talbot County, Maryland. The structure consists of three stories and a half basement and occupies an area of 5,440 square feet on property consisting of 0.85 acre.

The inner core area of the Inn dates from the *1st* half of the century when it served as a residence. However, the great majority of the present physical interior fabric and the entire exterior frame dates from the Robins' Hotel period of the 1870s. The remains of the oldest portion of the structure are encased in the former residential section of the Inn, with the major addition being added to the residence in the 1870s. The tavern addition was constructed during the mid-twentieth century.

During the eighteenth century the building appears to have been a large, five-bay, center hall plan, four-room residence. Local lore substantiates this description and examination of the existing basement suggests that the structure may have had such a plan. Freestanding masonry pad foundations can be found to either side of the center hall in the basement area. The northern section of the Inn still has a large freestanding chimney stack resting on this foundation. This suggests that the southern two bays of the residence were destroyed sometime between the mid-eighteenth century and the Civil War for the construction of the main block of the present Inn.

A fine period stairway graces the hallway and rises in its original form to the third floor level. The ballusters and handrail are exceptionally fine and the stair exhibits a comfortably low riser-tread relationship. Fine murals by John Moll grace the hall.

Small passageways still connect the two parlor rooms in the northern end of the residence on either side of the chimney. Both double parlors on the first and second floors exhibit exceptional eighteenth century raised panel pine paneling and woodwork. The interiors of these four rooms are the sole survivors of the pre-Robins' Hotel period. The mansarded third floor over the residence dates from the 1870 period. All of the other interior doors and woodwork of the 1870s Inn addition are of standard Victorian vernacular design.

The first floor sash are nine-over-nine. The second floor sash are four-over-four, as are the empire, dormered, third floor windows projecting from the mansard roof. The two large chimneys found at the southern ends of the Inn and the tavern wing were inspired by the Williamsburg colonial revival of the mid-twentieth century. The addition of a large front porch across the facade dates from the 1870s period.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #1.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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Robert Morris Inn
Talbot County

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(DESCRIPTION, continued)

The large dining room on the first floor of the Inn has been greatly altered. The impressive murals in this room are copies made from wallpaper samples used by salesmen in the 1830s. They were printed on a screw type press using 1600 orangewood blocks. The originals of these scenes, representing the Plains of West Point, a Winnipeg Indian village, the Natural Bridge of Virginia and Boston Harbor, were obtained by Mrs. John F. Kennedy and used in the White House reception room.

Enclosed within this folder are ten black and white enlargements, taken in 1977. Because the interior and exterior of the Robert Morris Inn has not changed since the photographs were taken, they were approved by Emma Jane Saxe, of the National Register of Historic Places. A letter dated January 22, 1980, illustrates verification.

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

SIGNIFICANCE

Named for a prominent person in Oxford history, the Robert Morris Inn is important both for the excellent Eastern Shore 18th century Classical influenced interior which is retained in the original portion of a structure which is essentially a late 19th century hotel and for its association with the transportation and commercial history of Oxford and Talbot County by providing room and board for travelers who came to the area for business and pleasure from the 19th century to the present.

HISTORY

It is not known exactly when and for whom the Robert Morris Inn was erected. The decorative detailing of the original section suggests a construction date from the late 18th century although some local historians believe the first quarter of the 1700s. This early section was apparently demolished when the building took on its present form of a hotel.

Robert Morris was an Englishman who arrived in Oxford (Talbot County) about 1738 and served as a representative of the English trading firm of Cunliffe Foster and Sons. Foster owned property in Oxford and Morris lived on part of it. By tradition, the original section of the Robert Morris Inn is said to be the house occupied by Morris although some research indicates that Foster may not have owned this particular property. Deed references for the transactions prior to 1839 are incomplete. Morris was the father of Robert Morris the Philadelphia banker who is known as the financier of the American Revolution.

The house was eventually converted for use as a hotel or inn and is referred to in sources as Riverview House and Riverview Hotel. The prominent Goldsborough family occupied the house for a long time during the first half of the 19th century. In April of 1831 the records indicate the property passed to Charles Willis; Willis in turn sold the property to William H. Groome on November 23, 1839. Mr. Groome owned the Inn for twenty four years, along with Elizabeth Kennard. They in turn sold it to Samuel Pentz in March of 1863. Consequently, the Inn passed through the hands of William Pentz, and R.H. Chamberlain to Albert K. Robins. Mr. Robins changed the name to the Robins Hotel, added much of the interior fabric and the entire exterior frame, which remains intact today. This major alteration which removed a substantial portion of the original structure and encased the remaining section in a Second Empire influenced cloak was made about the mid to late 1870s.

After some years of decline, the Robert Morris Inn was revitalized and in 1961 enlarged again. The 20th century renovations, however, did not
SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #2.

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Talbot County

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(SIGNIFICANCE, continued)

disturb the basic features of the late 19th century remodeling so that today the Robert Morris Inn is artifact of Oxford's history.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #3

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .85 acre

Quadrangle name Oxford Quadrangle

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	8
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4	2	8	3	1	0	0
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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

BEGINNING at Morris Street and the Strand, south $13^{\circ}46'$ East for 197.4 feet along Morris Street; thence, $N70^{\circ}34'E$ for 198.2 feet; thence $N15^{\circ}21'W$ for 198.7 feet to the Strand; thence, $S69^{\circ}45'W$ for 184.5 feet to the beginning

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title James B. Foster/Jack Finglass/Pamela James/Sarah Handy, Winter Intern
Ron Andrews

organization Robert Morris Inn/Maryland Historical Trust date June 6, 1977/January 1980

street & number P.O.Bx.26, Morris St./21 State Circle telephone (301) 269-2438

city or town Oxford/Annapolis state Maryland 21654/21401

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

 national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

date

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Robert Morris Inn
Talbot County
Maryland

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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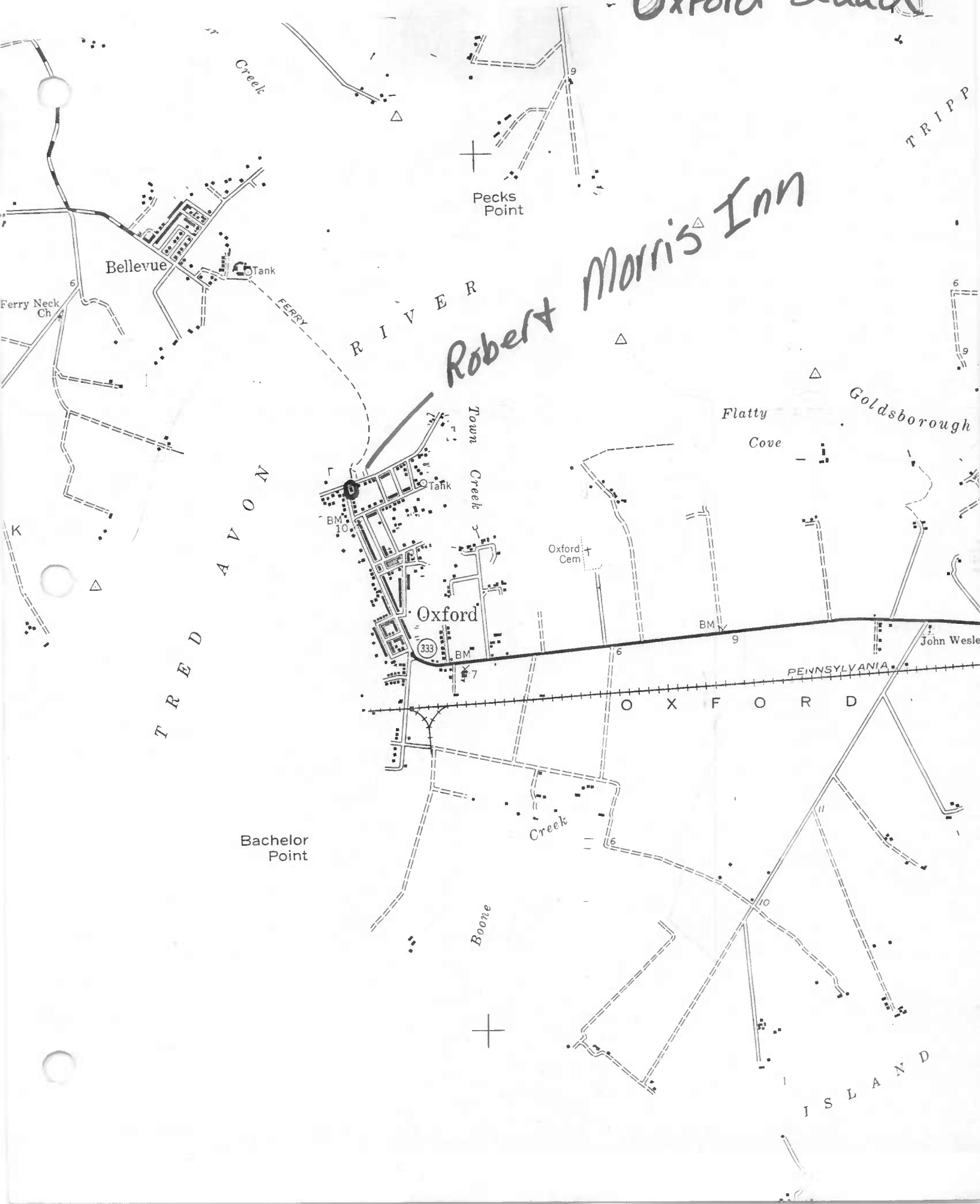
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Oxford Quad





12 x 1.57

75% 249

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